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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, May 1, 1930

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "The Backyard Playground." Information furnished by Mr. J. W. Faust, of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, co-operating with Better Homes in America.

--ooOoo--

Well! Well! Here we have National Child Health Day running right into the middle of Better Homes Week! Do you suppose we can celebrate both, and not be accused of partiality? It would be sad indeed, if the Better Homes enthusiasts accused us of spending too much time on Better Babies, or if the promoters of Better Babies said we were talking about Better Homes all the time. So we shall try to remain strictly neutral, and adopt as our motto today: "Better Homes for Better Babies." There -- that should be satisfactory.

Do we all know the purpose of May Day -- National Child Health Day? To make practical, in our American communities, the ideal set forth in the Child's Bill of Rights. This is the Child's Bill of Rights, written by President Hoover:

"The ideal to which we should strive is that there shall be no child in America:

"That has not been born under proper conditions,

"That does not live in hygienic surroundings,

"That ever suffers from undernourishment,

"That does not have prompt and efficient medical attention and inspection.

"That does not receive primary instructions in the elements of hygiene and good health,

"That has not complete birthright of a sound mind in a sound body,

"That has not the encouragement to express, in fullest measure, the spirit within which is the final endowment of every human being."

Now, before we continue our playground talk of yesterday, I want to read you a recipe for preserving children. I don't know who wrote it -- here is the recipe:

"To preserve children, take one large grassy field, half a dozen children, two or three small dogs, and a pinch of brook and pebbles. Mix the children and dogs well together, stirring constantly. Pour the brook over the pebbles; sprinkle the field with flowers; spread over all a deep blue sky, and bake in the sun. When brown, remove the children, and set them to cool in a bath tub."

There -- isn't that a splendid recipe? Now, in case one of the ingredients is lacking -- say the large grassy field, perhaps we can substitute



a backyard playground. Instead of a brook, we may have to use sandbox and swings.

Let's take a look at the backyard right now, and decide what sports it can provide this summer. Vacation time is coming, bringing long days when the children are free from school, and eager for something to do. The most enjoyable summer ever spent by a certain family I know was the summer they couldn't afford a vacation. They turned their backyard into a summer resort, and had some glorious times right at home. The children were kept off the streets, and safe from motor traffic, which even in small towns is becoming a serious danger.

What does it cost, to equip a backyard playground? Not so much as you might suppose. One expert claims it can be done for the price of a good automobile tire. Slides, swings, and other apparatus may be bought in junior sizes, which are cheaper than the full-size playground apparatus. Father and the boys can make some of the equipment. Perhaps several families in the neighborhood will cooperate to furnish equipment for all their children.

For children less than 10 years old, the sand-box is the first necessity for the backyard playground. Little children will spend hours at a time, modeling in sand. The box should be set in a shady place, or should have a sun-awning.

Next in importance to the sand-box is the swing. Children of all ages enjoy swinging. If your backyard doesn't have an apple tree, or a sturdy old elm --- well, in these modern times it's considered all right to hang a swing from a strong framework of lumber, or of galvanized iron pipe, set well into the ground. Just as satisfactory as an apple tree bough if less romantic.

Boys and girls between the ages of 8 and 14 like such apparatus as the horizontal bar, flying rings, and trapeze. At this age, which has been called the "Big Injun" age, children like to test their skill, and to show off their physical prowess.

Now what shall we have in the backyard playground, which will appeal to both young people and parents? Perhaps a clock golf course --- the holes are made by sinking tin cans into the ground. If there is space, let's have a croquet ground, or a tennis court. The side of the garage makes a good backstop for playing handball, and is also an ideal place on which to hang a basket for outdoor basketball practice.

What else do we want, in our backyard playground? Table and chairs, for quiet games and for handwork on warm days. The handicraft supply box may include modeling clay, raffia, beads, water colors, scissors, colored pencils, paste, and plenty of colored paper. Every boy should have a workbench and a set of good tools. Every little girl would be in her seventh heaven, with a playhouse and a set of tiny dishes and other toys for house-keeping.

But, some one says, our yard is small, and we need the space for the garden. Well, when it comes to choosing between the children's play, and a garden --- perhaps the children really should have first claim on the space. It is surprising how many shrubs and flowers can be tucked into the corners





of the yard, or around the edges, where they will be out of the way of playing youngsters, and still lend color to the yard. Let the children be responsible for part of the vegetable garden. There's nothing like a garden plot of his very own, no matter how tiny it may be, to give a child an interest in nature, and a pride in achievement.

And what about pets, in the backyard playground? Don't some of your happiest memories center about the pets you used to love? The shaggy old dog, the white rats, the rabbits -- and the pet 'coon which was the envy of every youngster in the neighborhood. Children learn to be considerate and reliable, through caring for pets.

Now, I can fancy another question going the rounds of my listeners: "If we have this ideal playground, won't our backyard be over-run by all the children in the neighborhood?" Decidedly, yes. But isn't the feeling of security worth it? Aren't you glad to know where your children are, to see what they are doing, and with whom they are playing? Mothers who have tried the plan say it works out very well -- they want to know the playmates of their boys and girls.

It is time to conclude our talk on "The Backyard Playground." First, though, let me read you this paragraph, written by Mr. J. W. Faust, of the Playground and Recreation Association of America:

"To provide wholesome recreation is as much the business of the home as to provide wholesome food. Home play might be called one of the duties of parenthood, if it were not such a rare privilege. Parents who are missing their share of it are missing a happy opportunity to meet their boys and girls as equals, to share their confidences, and to enter into the enchanting land of their dreams and imaginings. Do you remember the philosopher who so many years ago searched through distant countries for the fountain of youth? He might have found it in one very simple way, if he had stayed at home and played with his children."

Tomorrow: "Furnishing the House at Small Cost."

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